

My name is Pat Llewellyn, Missoula. As President of the Montana State Foster/Adoptive Parents Association the calls I get the most concern kinship care and adoption subsidies.

I have had calls from grandmothers who have spent their entire 401K's or retirement plans trying to provide for their grandchildren. Grandfathers who are struggling with the behaviors of their grandchildren and the lack of support they are receiving. Aunts and uncles who are concerned now about the impact these kids will have on their birth families as they continue to try find ways to finance their special needs. These are all people who truly love these children but have been, or may be forced to, return them to foster care as they can no longer afford to care for them. These families need to be respected for the decision they have made to step up to the plate for these children, they need financial support as well as ongoing training.

I get several calls or emails a month from families that are on the brink of disruption and dissolution as well as families that have adopted young children that are now aging, which means many times that they are beginning to display the Mental Health issues which most families are ill prepared for. The financial strains of raising a child with Mental Health issues are often staggering, from losing work time to be at the school to the hundreds of dollars in house repairs a year. Some of us have quit our jobs to be able to parent our children and keep them safe, many families have lost friends and family members who can no longer pretend to understand the behaviors of our children or most of all why we continue to parent them.

So many families are finding that these beautiful little people they adopted without a subsidy years ago have mounting needs as they age that they never anticipated or prepared for. I can honestly say that the staff at CFSD is caring and understands the need to support these families and most of all to ultimately avoid disruption and dissolution. We ask that you approve the financial support to CFSD to meet the growing needs of these families and keep children in the homes of these parents who have made such a commitment to their futures.

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